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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: SECRETARY'S MIDEAST TOUR, DPRK NUCLEAR
PROGRAM, U.S. POLICY TOWARDS PALESTINIANS

¶1. SUMMARY: "Oman" expresses skepticism about Secretary's latest Middle East tour, supports dialogue with Pyongyang, and claims that the Greater Middle East Initiative aims to weaken Arab culture. "Al-Watan" says the West's "double standards" are responsible for North Korea's nuclear program, and that the U.S. has increased the "humiliation" of Palestinians. Dailies front-page Johns Hopkins report on Iraqi civilian deaths, speculate on U.S. attack on Iran, and publish Oman's ratification of U.S.-Oman Free Trade Agreement. END SUMMARY.

COVERAGE

¶2. On October 12, English language dailies front-paged articles culled from agencies about the recent Johns Hopkins report claiming that 655,000 Iraqis have died since the U.S. invasion. In other coverage, Arabic language, government-owned daily "Oman" (circulation 38,000) regularly includes a dossier from Egyptian journalists filing from Cairo. The October 15 edition speculated on the possibilities of a U.S. military strike on Iran, and stated: "According to classified intelligence reports on a possible U.S. attack against Iran, the U.S. is sending security envoys to Israel and the region as part of the preparations for a strike against Iran. This attack will eventually have devastating effects worldwide." On October 16, Arabic and English language dailies front-paged the Sultanate's ratification of the U.S.-Oman Free Trade Agreement, which the Sultan issued through royal decree number 109/2006.

BLOCK QUOTES: CHANGING FRIENDS INTO ENEMIES

¶3. On October 14, a columnist in government-owned "Oman" (circulation 38,000) wrote about "Selectivity of American Policy and the New Political Developments:"

"The tour of the U.S. Secretary of State is similar to her previous tours that preceded and followed the Israeli aggression against Lebanon. We may also expect new tours, as this is the only tool that the Americans use whenever...issues become critical to the U.S. Administration...[the administration's] messages are only directed to the American people, who have no confidence in their administration and its foreign policy, one that has changed friends into enemies."

DOUBLE STANDARDS ON NORTH KOREA

14. On October 10, privately owned "Al-Watan" (circulation 42,000) asked, "The Series of Intimidations: When Will they End?":

"The Western countries should taste the bitterness of their failure and defeat after the announcement of the North Korean nuclear test. Although the Middle Eastern countries have nothing to do with this issue, and though they crave a world which is free of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), [they] have the right to... get angry for the 'schizophrenic' behavior of the Western countries that tried for a long time to prevent North Korea from going ahead with its nuclear test. The facts show that these Western countries, which falsely speak on behalf of the international community, were first in harming the international community by allowing a state like Israel to mobilize all types of WMDs, while devastating other countries like Iraq under the pretext that it has such weapons. That pretext proved to be a big lie. There is no doubt that these political disgraces that Western countries are involved in, under U.S. leadership, are what deserve to be put on trial and repudiated. The latest UN Security Council resolution on North Korea was very poor to the extent that it might been seen as encouraging North Korea to go ahead with its nuclear program, while...punishing any Arab state that escapes from the narrow cage crafted for it...so that it stays in the captivity of American and Israeli hegemony for life. Indeed, those most responsible for the North Korean bomb are Europe and U.S., and they should stand trial before the court of History for the double standards they are still enforcing against Arabs, particularly those in Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Sudan. They are being exposed to the toughest forms of oppression so that they will lose their Arab identity, and also their political freedom in all internal and external affairs. Above all, the North Korean test was a slap against the West. Yet it does constitute a new

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opportunity for these countries to amend their policies and reduce the series of intimidations that they practice against the Middle East, and admit their failure in managing their international policy in this area. Is there anyone who can resolve this issue before a new world confrontation occurs?"

SUPPORT FOR DIALOGUE WITH PYONGYANG

14. On October 15, "Oman" featured "Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary-General":

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"Despite many attempts to diminish the role of the UN, it has been proven in many cases that this organization can not be dispensed with and that it represents the conscience of the world...as a whole. Although the UN has at times slightly stayed away from the scenes, it is also true that the whole world has come back to it and has worked through it, after it proved itself to be an acceptable framework for dialogue for all the countries, with negligible exceptions. It has also been assured that working through international legitimacy provides an ability to attract support and sympathy from the different nations, as violating the international resolutions is still viewed with disapproval and condemnation by the different peoples of the world...it is very important to keep dialogue open with North Korea, because it has been proved that breaking relations with any country is ineffective in dealing with the disputed issue, whether in the short or the long run...the issue of the North Korean nuclear test and its impact...will continue up to Ban Ki-moon's tenure as UN Secretary General. He will need to give serious attention to the Korean peninsula's most serious developments since the 1950s. It is also hoped that the Arab-Israeli conflict will get Ki-moon's attention."

U.S. PROGRAMS "WEAKEN" ARAB CULTURE

15. On October 10, a local university professor wrote in "Oman" (circulation 38,000) about "America and the Ruinous Projects in the Region:"

"The United States of America has not given due consideration to the warnings about the dangerous consequences of its invasion and occupation of Iraq. Even Colin Powell, who was assigned to promote the war, advised the U.S. president to abandon those plans. American forces are in Afghanistan to fight terrorism and in Iraq to spread freedom and democracy. However, none of these goals has been achieved so far. The American projects started the twenty first century with a big lie. The Greater Middle East project or the New Middle East project...are nothing more than multiple faces that will be used to try and hide the continuing occupation. This occupation guarantees that America will exhaust the wealth of Arab communities on one hand, and disintegrate them on the other. The two Middle East Projects represent a sample of how the U.S. tampers with the area under big slogans, such as democracy, freedom and encouragement of global trade. The 'Middle East Project's' vision is to weaken the cultural, social and political entities that the Arab world is founded on, and divide it into small states and racial and sectarian groups. The Middle East project, whether the old or the new, is designed to serve the interests of America and Israel, which are working to change the appearance of the area."

U.S. "HUMILIATING" PALESTINIANS

16. On October 13, "Al-Watan" asked "What Disgrace Are They Talking About?":

"What is amusing in Rice's statements is her allegations that she wants to liberate the Palestinians from the 'daily humiliation' they suffer under Israeli occupation. We wonder what 'humiliation' Rice is talking about, at a time when her country is imposing economic siege on the Palestinian people while Israel is using the most sophisticated weapons to slaughter them, particularly in Gaza Strip, the latest of which is "Al Farahin Massacre" in Khan Younis yesterday. The disgraces caused by Israel to the Palestinian people take many forms, none of which Rice has never succeeded in stopping. Israel blocks money from reaching the Palestinian people, restricts border crossings and even prevents the people from leaving the country for Haj and Umra, or for seeking medical treatment abroad.

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Israel has also put pressure on the European Union states, the U.S., Japan, and other countries to stop sending aid or money to pay the salaries for Palestinian employees. [Israel] also arrests whoever it wants, continuously destroying houses. Moreover, it refuses to exchange the captured Israeli soldier with Palestinian captives, violating international laws and conventions. Rice and her aid David Welch announced that what is happening to the Palestinians could be attributed to Hamas Movement...does this reason justify all the "humiliation" that the Palestinian people are facing? Rice and Welch have added a new humiliation to the above, represented in their lies to the international community...that the U.S. is dedicated to the Middle East peace process. Perhaps if America dealt honestly with the situation, it would have admitted that the insults faced by the Palestinian people have been transferred to the Israelis and Americans after the military and political defeat they suffered in southern Lebanon and other occupied lands. As for the path of peace, it is as clear as the sun at noon. It is represented in the restoration of the Palestinian people's rights through the UN Convention."

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